

Adaptations: Moby Dick

Performance Research Project

Shelley Piasecka

University of Chester

**Unit of Assessment 33: Music, Drama, Dance,
Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies**



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Research Overview

Adaptations: Moby Dick is a performance research project, consisting of a script, stage production, and site-sensitive performance. The adaptation was commissioned for the *International Cornerstone Arts Festival* (2017). In-kind funding was provided by the Tall Ship Zebu for a site-sensitive performance for the *River Festival*, Liverpool (2019).

There were two interconnected stages to the project, underpinned by three research questions:

1. How do we re-imagine character within ensemble-led practice?
2. How does dramatic time differ from narrative time?
3. What is the relationship between the source text and adapted iterations?

The first stage of the project led to a fully realised stage production, shown in Liverpool and Chester (2017). A further iteration of the adaptation was performed on the Tall Ship Zebu, Liverpool (2019). Following this performance, the project considered the impact of site as cultural memory, disseminated through conference papers.

“Call me Ishmael”, *Moby Dick*’s iconic opening line has dominated analyses of the novel and in particular the function of first-person narratives (Blum 2013). To paraphrase the documentary filmmaker David Shaerf (2019), the narrator’s entreaty to the reader to know him by his name is an opportunity to suggest that we are all, at heart, Ishmael. As an ‘autodiegetic narrator’ (Menzies 2015), the character resists singularity – he is vagabond, whaler, dreamer, friend, philosopher, storyteller and dramatist. With this in mind, the adaptation was written for a company of actors to collectively, and individually, perform the role of Ishmael. The other parts (the men of the *Pequod*) were written as multi-role and purposefully gender-blind. This offered opportunities to re-imagine character and narrative presence beyond that of dramatic representation in order to allow different voices to be seen and heard. Key reading included biographical accounts of Melville (Olson 1997) and literary analyses of the novel (Otter 2013; Bryant *et al* 2011), as well as other stage adaptations (Wallace 2013; Welles 2011).

Moby Dick, to evoke the title, is a leviathan of a work - over 200,000 words in length. Any adaptation of the novel, therefore, has to take into account the vast amount of material (Hutcheon 2012; Laera 2014). For example, scene 14: *The Rachel*, refers to other whaling ships and voyages, condensing six chapters in total (page 72):

- The *Albatross*: a shell of a craft, manned by madmen!
- The *Jeroboam*: plagued!
- The *Rosebud*: what a smell!

- The *Virgin*: yet to catch a whale...
- The *Bachelor*: uncommonly jolly!
- The *Delight*: six men killed in a single day...

The question of how to deal with time was not simply concerned with condensing the word length or simplifying the plot. The novel's narrative structure moves between time periods, a conceit set up at the start of the story: 'Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me onshore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world' (Melville, 2004: 23). As the story unfolds, Ishmael is simultaneously both present and absent in the 'time' of the action. For example, scene 11: *The Castaway*, Ishmael reflects on the near drowning of the cabin boy Pip: 'Blame not Stubb too hardly. The thing is common in fishery and in the sequel of the narrative, I would come to learn what abandonment feels like myself' (page 67).

These qualities, coupled with the re-imaging of character, were pulled into the scripting and directorial process. This can be evidenced in the script, videos of the performances, a talk for the British Library co-hosted by Kings College London and the Melville Society (2017), and reviews of the stage production, written by Melville scholars Smith-Oyekole 2018; Murray 2017; and Wallace 2017.

In 2019, *Moby Dick* was performed on the Tall Ship Zebu for the River Festival, Liverpool. In 1839, Melville, a greenhorn sailor, arrived in Liverpool on the *St. Lawrence*, a merchant ship sailing out of New York. Given his association with the city, particularly with the waterfront, the *Zebu* seemed particularly befitting and historically in tune with Melville's writing. In this version of the adaptation, audiences were presented with scenes from the play, performed from different parts of the ship (not necessarily in any order) and sea shanties and songs. Albeit that the *Zebu* was moored to the quayside at the Albert Dock, there was a particular joy to be found working on a ship as opposed to a studio theatre. This said, the *Zebu*, a former Baltic trading vessel, is not a whaler. There is a gap, then, between what is 'real' and what is re-imagined for dramatic purposes, a view compounded when I visited the *Charles W. Morgan*, a 19th Century Whaler, moored at Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, USA. The impact of site as cultural memory (Carlson 2001), was subsequently examined in scholarly papers for a conference in New York, co-hosted by New York University and the Melville Society (2019), for the *Christmas Lectures*, Storyhouse, Chester (2019), and reflected upon in a conference article published in *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*: John Hopkins University Press (2020).

Key Reading

Barthes, R. (1977). "The Death of the Author", *Image, Music, Text*, Fontana: London

Blum, H. (2013). "Melville and Oceanic Studies", *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Shaerf, D. (2019). *Call Us Ishmael*, Documentary: Amazon Prime

Bryant, J & M K Bercaw & T Marr. (2011). *Ungraspable Phantom: Essays on 'Moby-Dick'*, The Kent State University Press: USA

- Carlson, M. (2001). *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, University of Michigan Press: USA
- Davey, M J. (2003). *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick: A Routledge Study Guide and Sourcebook*, Routledge: London
- Hutcheon, L. (2012). *A Theory of Adaptation (2nd Edition)*, Routledge: London
- Laera, M. (2014). *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, Methuen Drama: London
- Melville, H. (2004). *Moby Dick*, Reader's Digest Association (complete text): London
- Menzies, L. (2015) "Narrative in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*." <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/innervate/14-15/02-lauren-menzies-q33112-pp-38-52.pdf>
- Murray, H. 2017. Review: The Eleventh International Melville Society Conference, <https://usso.uk>
- Olson, C. (1997). *Call Me Ishmael*, John Hopkins University Press: USA
- Otter, S. (2013). "Reading Moby Dick", *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- Smith-Oyekole, C. 2018, "We Look Deep Down and Yet Believe" in *Leviathan*, John Hopkins University Press, Vol 20: 1, 11-114.
- Wallace, R K. (2013). *Heggie and Scheer's Moby-Dick: A Grand Opera for the Twenty-first Century*, University of North Texas Press: USA
- Wallace, R.K. (2017) Dickinson and Melville 2017, in <https://dickinsonatnkuandmelvilleinlondonin2017.wordpress.com/2017/07/page/2/>
- Welles, O. (2011). *Moby Dick Rehearsed*, Samuel French: London

Stage Production and Site Performances

Video Links

1: Promotional Research Trailer (2017): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1T5SrhJxPEE>

2: Full Stage Production (2017):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp3j63UzUal&feature=youtu.be>

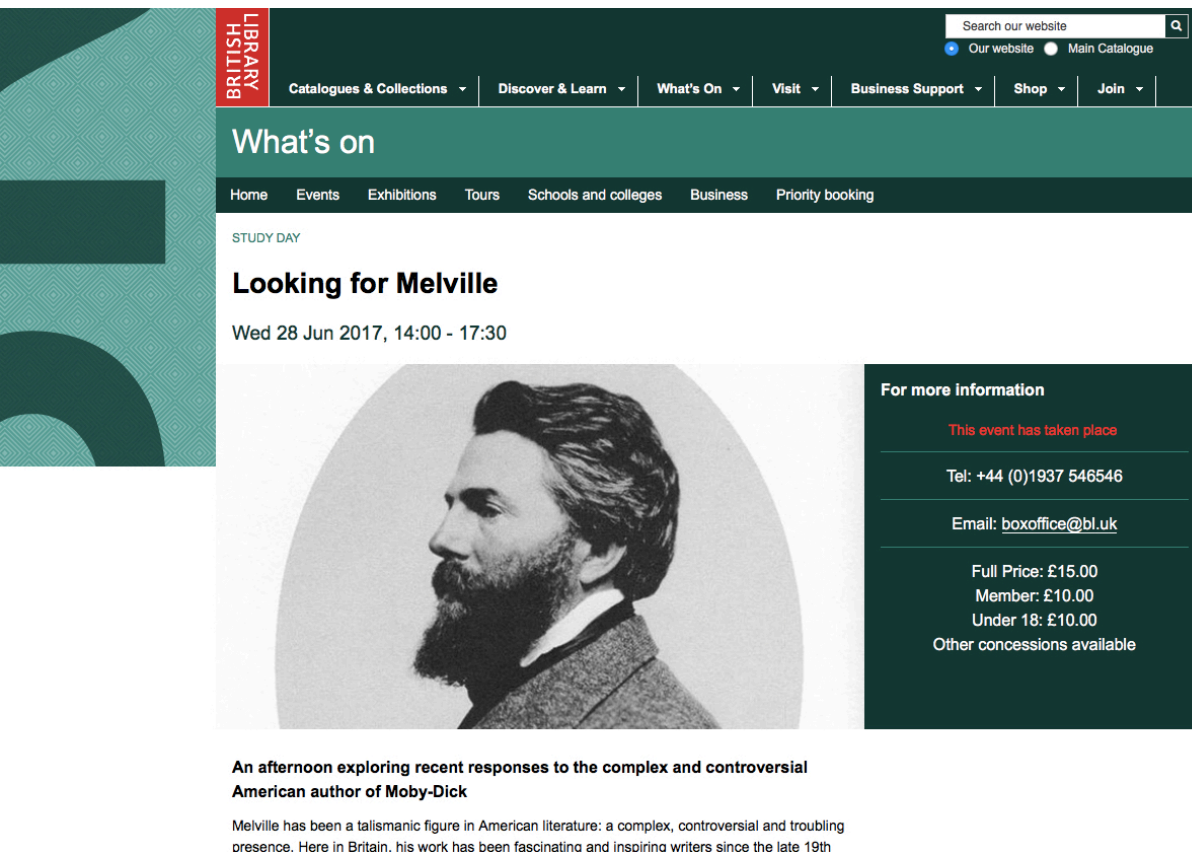
3: Drama Workshop on the Tall Ship Zebu (2019):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZTmp5KApJo>

4: Aloft on the Tall Ship Zebu (2019): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iROYaY-xXYU>



Adaptations: Moby Dick Scholarly Encounters

British Library, *Looking for Melville*, 2017



The screenshot shows the British Library website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links: 'Our website' (selected) and 'Main Catalogue'. Below this is a menu with categories: 'Catalogues & Collections', 'Discover & Learn', 'What's On', 'Visit', 'Business Support', 'Shop', and 'Join'. The main header reads 'What's on'. A sub-header lists navigation options: 'Home', 'Events', 'Exhibitions', 'Tours', 'Schools and colleges', 'Business', and 'Priority booking'. The event title 'Looking for Melville' is prominently displayed, followed by the date and time 'Wed 28 Jun 2017, 14:00 - 17:30'. A large portrait of Herman Melville is featured. To the right, a 'For more information' box contains the text 'This event has taken place', contact details (Tel: +44 (0)1937 546546, Email: boxoffice@bl.uk), and pricing (Full Price: £15.00, Member: £10.00, Under 18: £10.00, Other concessions available). Below the portrait, a paragraph describes the event as 'An afternoon exploring recent responses to the complex and controversial American author of Moby-Dick'. A final paragraph states: 'Melville has been a talismanic figure in American literature: a complex, controversial and troubling presence. Here in Britain, his work has been fascinating and inspiring writers since the late 19th'.

In 2017, Piasecka was an invited panelist at an event held at the British Library, hosted by Kings College London and The Melville Society. The panel included award-winning authors and the documentary filmmaker David Schaerf. Piasecka's contribution to the discussion, which explored the nature of stage adaptation, ensemble and dramatic time, has been cited by Smith-Oyekole 2018; Murray 2017; Wallace 2017.

"Caroline Hack, Philip Hoare, Shelley Piasecka, and Michael Hall showed how Melville's concepts, characters, and literary style continue reverberating through artistic production, inspiring new adaptations, art forms, and ways to re-envision and represent the world" (Smith-Oyekole, 2018, 112).

Smith-Oyekole, C. 2018, "We Look Deep Down and Yet Believe" in *Leviathan*, John Hopkins University Press, Vol 20: 1, 11-114.

Murray, H. 2017. Review: The Eleventh International Melville Society Conference, <https://usso.uk>

Wallace, R.K. (2017) Dickinson and Melville 2017, in <https://dickinsonatnkuandmelvilleinlondonin2017.wordpress.com/2017/07/page/2/>

Melville's Origins, The Twelfth International Melville Society Conference, New York University, USA 2019

"Adapting Classic Texts for the Stage: Ensemble and Multi-Role in *Moby-Dick*."

MELVILLE'S ORIGINS

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Conference paper extract. While not discounting Barthes' assertion that 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (1977), as an adapter I was keen to ensure that the philosophical and Shakespearean qualities of Melville's writing were pulled into the scripting and rehearsal process. What emerged was an ensemble and multi-role approach to the text, separated into seventeen scenes. This included song, dance and physical theatre as well as soliloquies and monologues. Of the latter, I weaved in my own writing through the original in order to move between key moments in the novel. For example, in scene 14, *The Rachel*, the script refers to other whaling ships and voyages and in scene 6, *Knights and Squires and Cetology*, we are introduced to the Men of the *Pequod* as well as to the "great Leviathan himself" - in short, a script condenses time and place as much as it opens out the story for an audience.

Melville's Origins: Conference Report (Article)

Piasecka, S. (2020). "The Furling of the Sails", in *Leviathan*, John Hopkins University Press, Vol 22: 1, 183-185



"In 1839, Melville arrived in Liverpool on the *St. Lawrence*, a merchant ship sailing out of New York. He would write in the novel *Redburn*, "Sailors love this Liverpool; and upon voyages to distant parts of the globe, will be continually dilating upon its charms and attractions, and extolling above all other seaports in the world" (138). Given Melville's association with the city, particularly with the waterfront, the *Zebu* seemed a particularly befitting site. This said, she is a tall ship and not a whaler. The *Charles W. Morgan*, therefore, offered an unparalleled opportunity to see at first-hand an actual whaleship. I was particularly interested in the tryworks, the blubber room, the forecastle, the quarter-deck, and the cabin table, all key references in the novel. From an adapter's perspective, to test the weight of a harpoon, to run one's fingers across the warm wooden panelling, to lean over the bulwarks, and to lie down on a cramped bunk is to understand the source text in an entirely new and embodied way" (Piasecka, 2020, 184).

Storyhouse, *Christmas Lectures*, 2019

Christmas Lectures: Chapter 22. Merry Christmas

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Past event

A Christmas Lecture with Associate Professor Shelley Piasecka

A series of one-hour lectures covering a range of fascinating subjects delivered by faculty members of the University of Chester.

At last the anchor was up, the sails were set, and off we glided. It was a sharp cold Christmas... (Moby Dick)

At the end of the nineteenth century, a New York customs inspector and writer died in relative obscurity. His name was Herman Melville and he would later come to be regarded as a literary giant, equal in stature to Mark Twain, John Steinbeck

Duration

Approx 60 mins



The *Christmas Lectures* are public-facing scholarly talks, hosted by Storyhouse, a 37 million-pound cultural centre in the city of Chester. In this lecture, Piasecka introduced audience to life on a Whaler, before moving on to discuss different adaptations of the novel, including: Orsen Welles' *Moby Dick Rehearsed* (1995) and Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby Dick: A Grand Opera for the 21st Century* (Wallace 2013).

With reference to site as cultural memory, informed by her experience of visiting a 19th Century Whaler, Piasecka said:

"We'd been invited to row a whaleboat and after a remarkably smooth ride out on the river, thanks to my fellow Melvillean oarsmen/women, we pulled up alongside the blackened hull of the *Charles W. Morgan*. By now, the drizzle had turned into a very determined downpour. Far from spoiling the experience, the weather seemed perfectly in tune with our surroundings. I realised that I hadn't taken into consideration the sheer size of a whaling ship nor had I appreciated fully the dangers of whaling. I knew this on an intellectual level, of course. But, somehow, being on the water, dwarfed by the ship, underpinned my reading of the novel. I thought of Pip's nervous lowering on that fateful day and of Melville's observations that all men live under a shadow: *"All men live enveloped in whale lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the subtle, ever-present perils of life."*

Post-Show Director's Talks



Piasecka, first from left, University of Chester 2017

Research findings were disseminated through performance and afterwards during post-show director's talks. Associate Professor William Blazek chaired the director's talk for the International Cornerstone Arts Festival.

***Moby Dick* Stage Production**

**International Cornerstone Arts Festival, Liverpool (March 2017)
University of Chester (May 2017)**



Scene 8: Stubb Kills a Whale

Ishmael: Stubb hurled his harpoon at the whale.

The line held.

Hold on! Hold on, he cried.

The boat flew through the boiling water.

The line extended the entire length of the upper part of the boat, you would have thought the craft had two keels- one cleaving the water and the other in the air.

The whale pushed forwards.

The line held.

Each man clinging to his seat, to prevent being tossed to the foam.

A Nantucket sleigh ride.



Scene 13: The Great South Sea
Richard Wiseman as Ishmael

Ishmael: We emerged at last upon the great South Sea. The great Pacific Ocean itself! That serene ocean rolled eastwards from me, a thousand leagues of blue.

There is no one who knows the sweet mystery of this sea, whose awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath. Here are millions of shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnambulisms, reveries; all that we call lives and souls, lie dreaming, dreaming, still; tossed like slumberers in their beds; the ever rolling waves, the ever restless waves, the tide-beating heart of the earth.



Scene 3: Jonah and the Whale: Hymn

The ribs and terror in the whale,
Arched over me in a gloom,
While all God's sunlit waves rolled by,
And lift me down to doom.

I saw with the opening maw of hell,
With endless sorrows there;
Which none but they that feel can tell,
I was plunging to despair.

In black distress, I called my God,
I scarce believe him mine,
He bowed his ear to my complaints
No more the whale confine.



Scene 3: Jonah and the Whale
Simon Piasecki as Father Mapple

Mapple: Oh Shipmates, Sin not; but if you do, take to heed of it like Jonah! Jonah did the Almighty bidding. And what was that, shipmates? To preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood! For what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God?



Rehearsal, Scene 16: The Chase
Richard Wiseman as Ishmael; Simon Piasecki as Captain Ahab

Ishmael: Starbuck! He said. Some ships sail from their ports, and ever afters are missing. Some men die at ebb tide; some at low water; some at the full of the flood. For the third time I stake my soul upon this voyage. Starbuck, I am old. Shake hands with me, man.

Their hands met; their eyes fastened. Oh my Captain, my Captain – noble heart – go not- go not!



Rehearsal, Scene 8: Stubb Kills a Whale
Jessie Harris as Ishmael



Scene 16: The Chase
Deborah Thomas, Jessie Harris, Josh Slater, Scott Parry, Nick Wright

From all the ships bows, nearly all seamen hang inactive, hammers, bits of plank, lances, harpoons lifeless, still, all eyes on the whale. Retribution is swift, unforgiving. The solid white buttress of the whale's forehead smotes the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reel. Some men fall flat on their faces and through the breach they hear the waters pour.



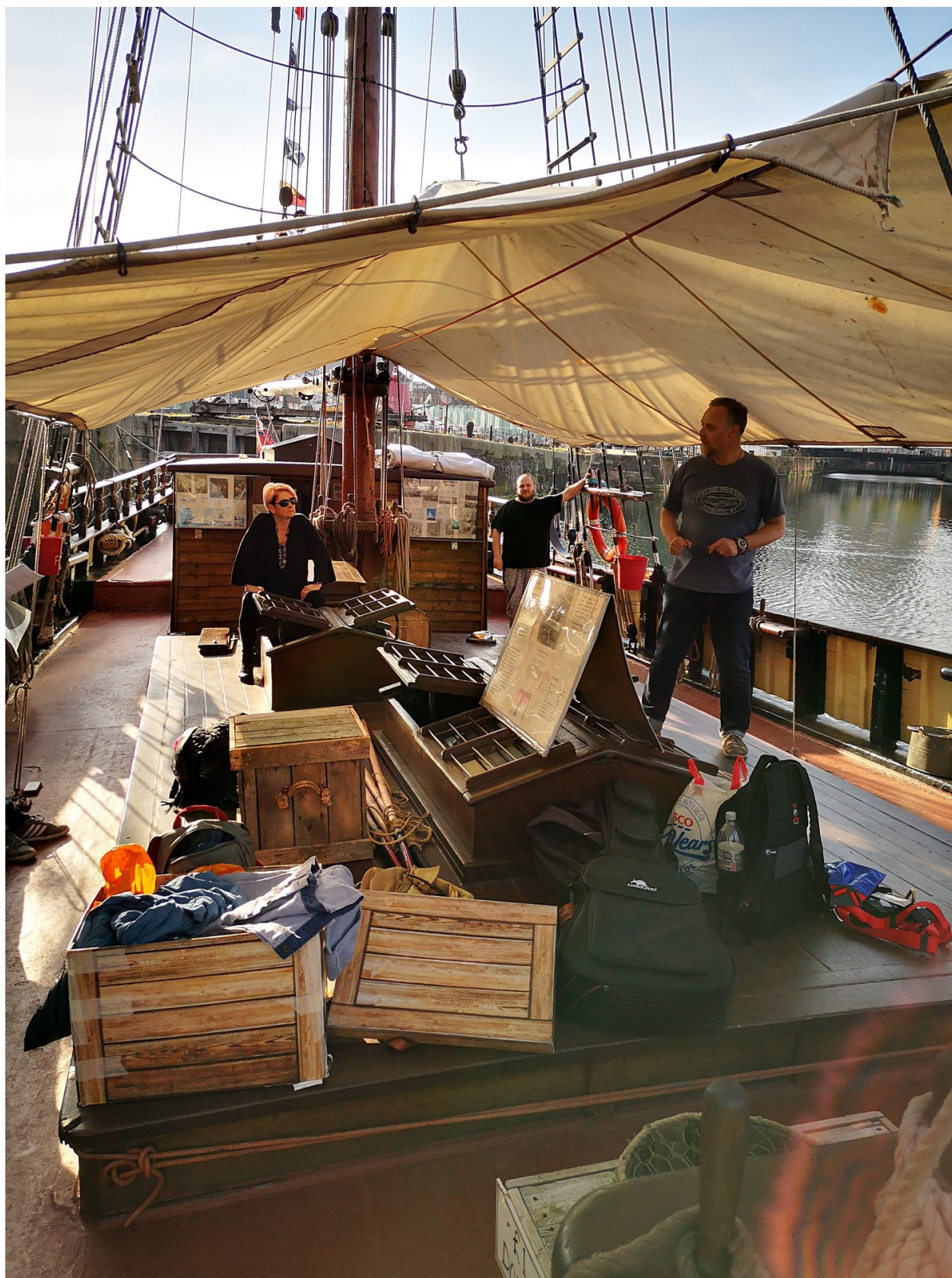
Moby Dick: Cast & Crew
(From left to right) Kitty Murray, Nick Wright, Scott Parry, Shelley Piasecka, Jessie Harris, Deborah Thomas, Josh Slater, Richard Wiseman, Simon Piasecki

Moby Dick Site-Sensitive Performance

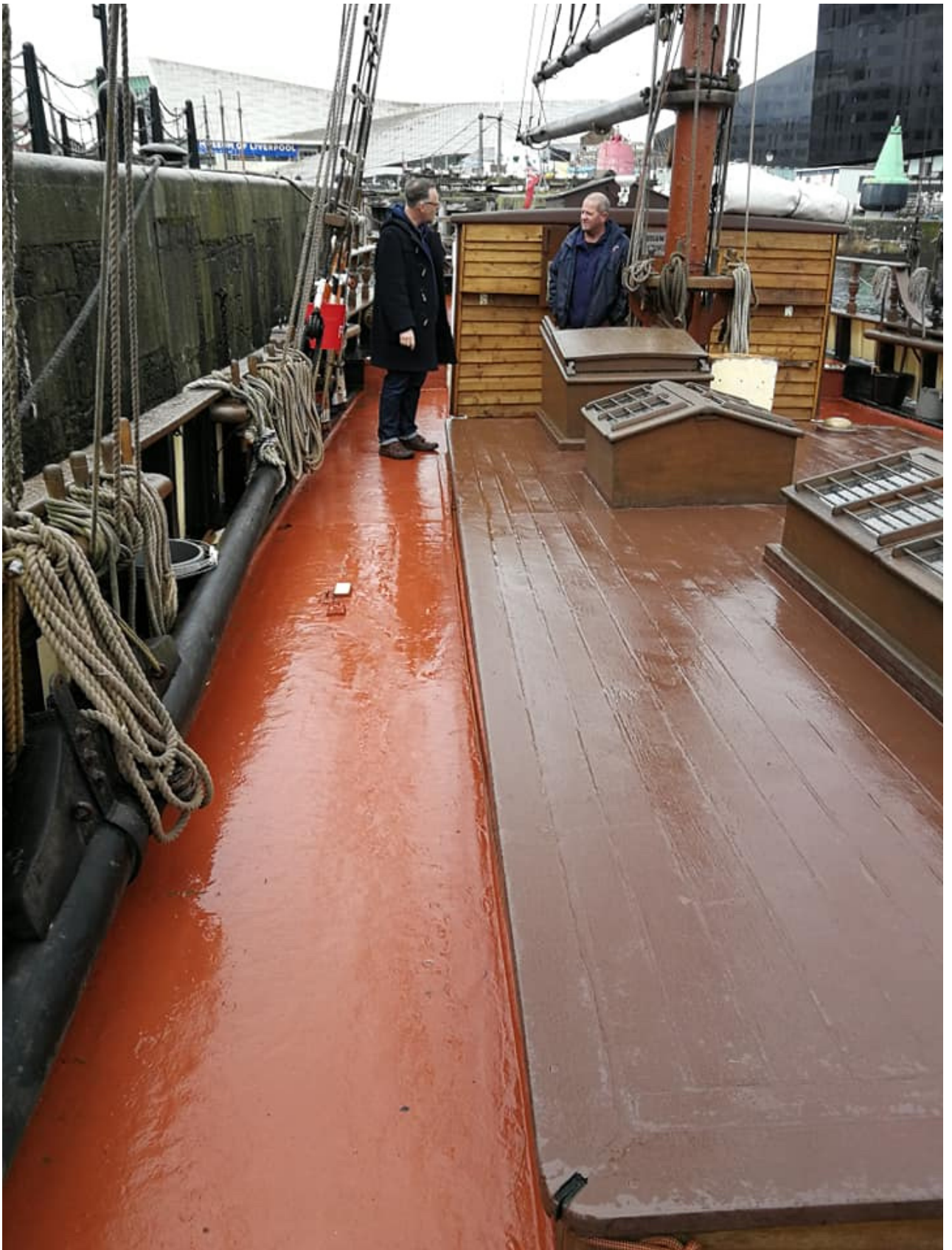
Tall Ship Zebu
Liverpool River Festival June 2019



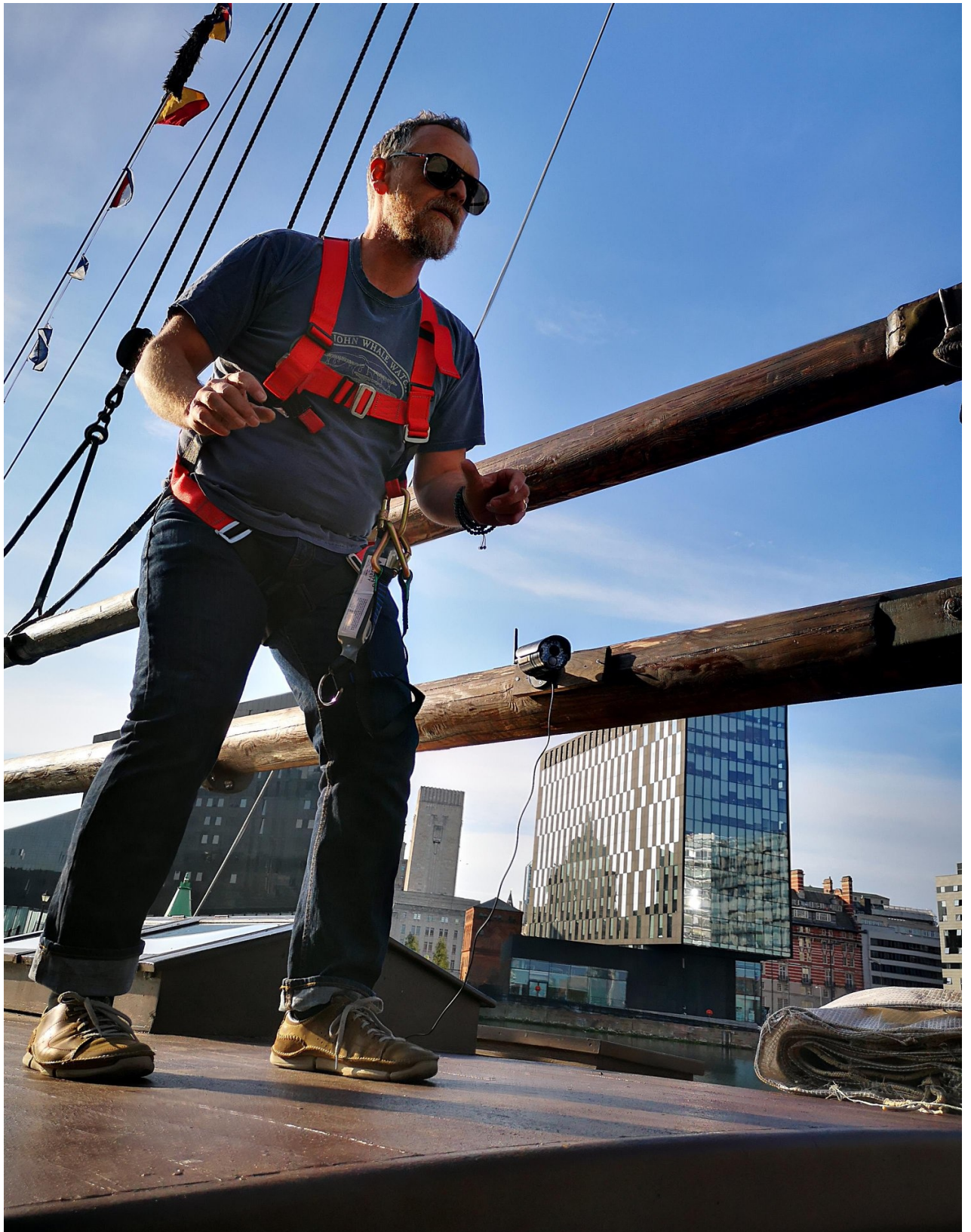
Tall Ship Zebu
Albert Dock, Liverpool



Rehearsal: May 2019
Deborah Thomas & Simon Piasecki



**Captain Ahab meets the Captain of the Zebu
Simon Piasecki & Captain Gerrith Borrett**



Rehearsal: Climbing the Rigging
Simon Piasecki



**Tall Ship Zebu
River Festival, Liverpool**

Ishmael: She was a ship of the old school. Long seasoned and weather-stained, her ancient decks worn and wrinkled. Her masts stood stiffly up like the spires of the old kings of Cologne. But to all these old antiquities, were added new and marvelous features, pertaining to the wild business that for more than half a century she had followed.



Call Me Ishmael
Simon Piasecki & Nick Wright

Melville: Dear Sirs. In the latter part of the coming autumn I shall have ready a new work; and I write you now to propose its publication in England. The book is a romance of adventure founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Whale Fisheries, and illustrated by my own personal experience, of two years & more, as a harpooner.



Scene 1: Loomings
Simon Piasecki & Deborah Thomas Ishmael

Ishmael: There is nothing surprising in this. All men, some time or another, cherish the same feelings towards the ocean. Walk the city of a Sabbath afternoon and what will you see? Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, thousands and thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the splies, some seated on pierheads, some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China and others high aloft in the rigging. In weekdays these are all landsmen, pent up in lath and plaster –tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How is this? What do they here?



Scene 1: Loomings
Jamie-Glyn Bale as Ishmael

Ishmael: But, when I go to sea I do not go as a passenger. For to go as a passenger you must need a purse and a purse is a rag unless you have something in it!



Aloft
Simon Piasecki

We'll rant and we'll roar, like New Bedford whalers,
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and below
Until we sight The New Bedford light
Then straight down the channel to anchor we'll go.



Scene 11: The Castaway
Nick Wright as Ishmael

The awful loneliness he must have felt. It must have been intolerable, a lonely castaway, though the loftiest and brightest. It was only mere chance that the second whale boat happened to pass. He was picked up and rescued. But, while the sea had kept his body afloat, it had drowned his soul. Not drowned entirely. Rather carried down alive to new, strange depths. In the immensity of the ocean he saw his own insignificance and God's indifference. His shipmates declared him mad.



Scene 12: Queequeg's Coffin
Jamie-Glyn Bale as Ishmael

Ishmael: With a wild whimsy he used his coffin for a sea chest, emptying into it his canvas bag of clothes. Many hours he spent carving the lid in all manner of grotesque figures and drawings, striving in his own way to copy the twisted tattooing of his own body. It became an extension of his own self, his own body of sorts.

I tell you this because there too came a time when I was in great need of Queequeg's coffin.

***Moby Dick* drama workshop on the Tall Ship Zebu**



**Exploring narrative and site on the Tall Ship Zebu
Induction Project for drama and acting students 2019**

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Adapted for the stage by Shelley Piasecka (2017)

Production Note:

The script is purposefully written for a company of actors to share the role of Ishmael – the play's events are seen through Ishmael's eyes. In the original production, lines were divided between the company and at other times the company spoke in unison (see lines printed in bold font). Other parts were played by individual actors. This adaptation includes traditional sea-shanties, sung either *a-cappella*, or accompanied with live instrumentation (guitars and mandolins).

Scene I Loomings

Melville Dear Sirs,
In the latter part of the coming autumn I shall have ready a new work; and I write you now to propose its publication in England. The book is a romance of adventure founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Whale Fisheries, and illustrated by my own personal experience, of two years & more, as a harpooner.

Company **CALL ME Ishmael.**

Ishmael Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me onshore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet – it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from knocking people's hats off – then, I would account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship.

There is nothing surprising in this. All men, some time or another, cherish the same feelings towards the ocean. Walk the city of a Sabbath afternoon and what will you see? Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, thousands and thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the splies, some seated on pierheads, some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China and others high aloft in the rigging. In weekdays these are all landsmen, pent up in lath and plaster – tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How is this? What do they here?

Or, say, you are in the country. Take any path you please and ten to one it carries you down in a dale and leaves you by a pool in a stream. Let that man set his feet a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water. There is magic in it.

Almost every robust healthy boy at some time, or another, is crazy to go to sea. Why, upon your first voyage as a passenger, how did you feel when first told that you and your ship were out of sight of land? Surely all this is not without meaning?

But, when I go to sea I do not go as a passenger. For to go as a passenger you must need a purse and a purse is a rag unless you have something in it!

I, Ishmael, go to sea as a simple sailor. True they order me about some... When, some old hunk of a sea captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks what does that indignity amount to? I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunk- however they may thump and punch me about.

I always go to sea as a sailor because they pay me for my troubles, Whereas, they never pay passengers a single penny. On the contrary, passengers themselves must pay. Afore I had made my way as a merchant man, but a lack remained in that only to be assuaged by a voyage on a whaler, a hunt for the leviathan. Such a portentous and mysterious monster aroused all my curiosity. The wild and distant seas where he rolled his island bulk, the undeliverable, nameless perils of the whale, these with all the marvels of a thousand Patagonian sights and sounds swayed me to my wish. With other men, such things would not have been inducements, but I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas and land on barbarous coasts. To see the great whale himself...

Ishmael picks up carpetbag, stuffs in old shirts and heads to New Bedford, with some excitement.

[sea shanty music – to transition]

Scene 2 The Spouter Inn

Ishmael *[arrives late in New Bedford – he’s missed the ferry to Nantucket. He is cold, tired and disappointed. He must find somewhere to stay but has little money – he avoids the cheery inns to find the Spouter Inn]*

[to the audience] I’d like a room for the night, but the Inn is full...

Landlord But avast, you hain’t no objections to sharing a harpooneer’s blanket, have ye? I s’pose you are goin’ a-whalin’, so you’d better get used to that sort of thing.

Ishmael *[to the audience]* I told him that I never liked to sleep two in a bed but if the landlord really had no other place for me and if the harpooneer was not decidedly objectionable, I’d put up with the half of any decent man’s blanket.

Landlord I thought so. All right, take a seat. Supper? You want supper? *[to the ensemble]* Supper’ll be ready directly.

Ishmael *[gesturing to a whaler stuffing his mouth with dumplings]* that ain’t the harpooner is it?

Landlord Oh no. The harpooneer is a dark-complexioned chap. He never eats dumpling, he don’t – he eats nothing but steaks, and he likes ‘em rare.

Ishmael The devil he does! Where is that harpooneer? Is he here?

Landlord He’ll be here before long.

Ishmael Landlord. I’ve changed my mind about that harpooneer. I shan’t sleep with him. I’ll try this bench here.

Landlord Just as you please, I'm sorry I can't spare ye a tablecloth for a mattress, and it's a plaguy rough board.

[there follows a sequence of the landlord skimming the bench and Ishmael trying to get comfortable. He fails... it is late]

During the sequence, the company sing:

Come all you bold fishermen, listen to me,
While I sing to you a song of the sea.
Then blow ye winds westerly, westerly blow,
We're bound to the southward, so steady we go.

First comes the blue-fish a-wagging his tail,
He come up on the deck and yells: "All hands make sail!
Then blow ye winds westerly, westerly blow,
We're bound to the southward, so steady we go.

Up jumps the eel with his slippery tail,
Climbs up aloft and reefs the topsail
Then blow ye winds westerly, westerly blow,
We're bound to the southward, so steady we go.

Ishmael Landlord. What sort of chap is he – does he always keep such late hours?

Landlord No, he is generally an early bird, but tonight he went out a-peddling, you see and I don't see what on airth keeps him so late, unless, maybe, he can't sell his head.

Ishmael Can't sell his head? What sort of bamboozingly story is this you are telling me? Do you pretend to say, Landlord, that this harpooneer is actually engaged this blessed Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, in peddling his head around this town?

Landlord Precisely. And I told him he couldn't sell it here. The market's overstocked.

Ishmael With what?

Landlord With heads, to be sure; ain't there too many heads in the world.

Ishmael I tell you, Landlord, you'd better stop spinning that yarn to me – I'm not green.

Landlord Maybe not, but I'd rayther guess you'll be done brown if that ere harpooneer hears you a slanderin' his head.

Ishmael I'll break it for him!

Landlord It's broke already and that's the very reason he can't sell it.

Ishmael Landlord, you and I must understand one another. I come to your house and want a bed; you tell me you can only give me half a one and that the other half belongs to a certain harpooneer. You persist in telling me the most mystifying and exasperating stories! I demand of you to speak out and tell me who and what this harpooneer is and when I shall be safe to spend the night with him. In the first place, you will be so good as to unsay that story about selling his head, which if true I take to be good evidence that the man is stark raving mad and I have no wish to sleep with a madman and you, sir, will be liable to a criminal prosecution!

Landlord Well, that a purty long sermon - but be easy. This here harpooneer I have been tellin' you of have just arrived from the South Seas, where he bought up a lot of them 'balmed New Zealand heads. He's sold all but one of them and that one he's trying to sell tonight, 'cause tomorrow's Sunday and it would not do to be sellin' head about the streets when folks are going to churches. I stopped him last Sunday goin' out with four heads strung on a string, for all the airth like a string of onions.

Ishmael Is that Harpooneer a dangerous man?

Landlord *[pause]* He pays regular... But come it is a nice bed and pretty big enough for two to kick around in *[Coffin takes a candle and lights the way]*

Ishmael *[to audience]* I considered the matter for a moment and then upstairs we went. I was ushered into a small room, cold as a clam, and furnished, sure enough, with a prodigious bed, almost big enough for four harpooneers to sleep abreast *[he turns to speak to Coffin but the landlord has disappeared]*.

Ishmael looks around the room - after some hesitation he eventually gets into bed.

Queequeg, the harpooner arrives, carrying his shrunk head - Ishmael relays the following in fascinated horror, while Queequeg undresses:

Lord save me! That must be the harpooner, the infernal head-peddler.

[Ishmael describing Queequeg to the audience]. He had a purplish, yellowish face, tattooed with black squares and no hair to speak of – nothing but a scalp knot twisted up on his forehead! His body was similarly tattooed – as if a parcel of green frogs were running up the trunks of young palms.

[Sudden realisation] Heaven's above! I'm sleeping with a cannibal!

Queequeg, once undressed takes out a wooden idol, set it in the fireplace and makes a burnt offering of ships biscuits.

Queequeg gets into bed and discovers Ishmael...

Queequeg Who-e debelyou? You no speak-e, dam-me, I kill-e.

Ishmael Landlord! Landlord! Angels save me!

- Queequeg** Speak-e! tell-mee! Who-ee be! Or dam-me, I kill-e!
- Landlord** *[running into the room]* Don't be afraid now, Queequeg here wouldn't harm a hair of your head.
- Ishmael** Stop your grinning! And, why didn't you tell me that the infernal harpooneer was a cannibal?
- Landlord** Didn't I tell ye, he was a-peddlin' heads around the town. [to Queequeg] Look here – you sabbee me, I sabbee you – this man sleepe you – you sabbee?
- Queequeg** Me sabbee. Me Queequeg.
You! Get in bed!
- Ishmael** *[in between the cries: Queequeg and the Ishmaels on the floor]* My first encounter of Queequeg was not encouraging. He was the most peculiar of men. But, savage as he was, and hideously marred about the face his countenance had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable. You cannot hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tatoosings, I thought I saw traces of a simple, honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes, fiery black and bold, there seemed tokens of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils. Ere long, he became my most boon companion, my bosom friend.
- Queequeg** You and me, we married! Now go to sleep!
- Ishmael** *[after consideration]* What's all the fuss I've been making – the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian....

Ishmael and Queequeg share a bed– the audience should realise it is companionable and friendly. They share a few puffs on Queequeg's tomahawk – Queequeg embraces Ishmael, pressing foreheads, blows out the light, falls asleep.

Scene 3 **Jonah and The Whale**

The scene is a church – the pulpit the prow of a whaling ship.

Song: The Ribs and Terror in the Whale

The ribs and terror in the whale,
Arched over me in a dismal gloom,
While all God's sunlit waves rolled by,
And lift me deepening down to doom.

I saw with the opening maw of hell,
With endless pains and sorrows there;
Which none but they that feel can tell,
Oh, I was plunging to despair.

In black distress, I called my God,
When I could scarce believe him mine,
He bowed his ear to my complaints-
No more the whale did me confine.

F. Mapple Beloved shipmates, the last chapter of Jonah - And God had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

Jonah thinks that a ship made by men will carry into countries where God does not reign. See ye not then, shipmates, that Jonah sought to flee worldwide from God?

But, the sea rebels; a great storm comes on, the ship is like to break. When the boatswain calls all hands to lighten her; when boxes, bales, and jars are clattering overboard; when the wind is shrieking, and the men are yelling and every plank thunders with trampling feet, Jonah sleeps his hideous

sleep. He sees no black sky and raging sea, and hears too late the far rush of the mighty whale. He hears too late the rush of the mighty whale!

Oh Shipmates, he is taken and dropped like an anchor into the sea, into the yawning jaws awaiting him; and the whale shoots-to all his ivory teeth, like so many white bolts, upon his prison.

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord out of the fish belly. But does he weep and wail for deliverance?

Oh, Shipmates! He does not weep and wail for deliverance! On the contrary, Jonah accepts his punishment. And, how pleasing to God was this conduct in Jonah.

Then God spake to the fish and from the shuddering cold and blackness of the sea the whale vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Oh Shipmates, Sin not; but if you do, take to heed of it like Jonah! Jonah did the Almighty bidding. And what was that, shipmates? To preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood! For what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God?

Song reprise:

With speed he flew to my relief,
As on a radiant dolphin borne
Awful, yet bright, as lightning shone
The face of my Deliverer God.

My song for ever shall record
That terrible, that joyful hour;
I give the glory to my God,
His all the mercy and the power.

Scene 4 The Pequod

Company to establish the quayside/the Pequod – physical theatre, use of staging and props.

Ishmael *[to the audience]* I learnt that there were three ships up for three-years' voyages – the *Devil-Dam*, The *Tit-bit* and the *Pequod*. The *Pequod*, you may remember, was the name of the celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians. I hopped aboard and peered and pried about her and decided that this was the very ship!

She was a ship of the old school. Long seasoned and weather-stained, her ancient decks worn and wrinkled. Her masts stood stiffly up like the spires of the old kings of Cologne. But to all these old antiquities, were added new and marvellous features, pertaining to the wild business that for more than half a century she had followed.

She was a cannibal of a craft.

The *Pequod* was a whale of a craft.

All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to. She sported a tiller carved from the long narrow jaw of her hereditary foe. She was a noble craft but somehow a most melancholy.

Enter Captain Peleg and Captain Bildad.

Ishmael *[to Captain Peleg]* I was thinking of shipping.

C. Peleg Thou wast, wast thou? I see thou art no Nantucketer – ever been in a stove boat?

Ishmael No sir, but, I have no doubts I shall soon learn. I've been on several voyages in the merchant service, and I think that-

C. Peleg Marchant service be damned. Talk not that lingo to me. Do you see this leg? I'll take that leg away from thy stern, if thou talkest of the marchant service to me again. Marchant service indeed! But, flukes! Man what makes thee want to go a-whalin', eh?

Ishmael *[stuttering]* Well, sir, I want to see what whaling is. I want to see the world.

C. Peleg Want to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eyes on Captain Ahab?

Ishmael Who is Captain Ahab, sir?

C. Peleg He is the Captain *[Ishmael is puzzled, he assumed C. Peleg to be the captain]*.

[Captain Peleg explains...] It belongs to me and old Captain Bildad here to fit out the Pequod for her voyage. Captain Ahab is the Captain of this ship.

Clap eyes on him, young man, and thou wilt find he has only one leg. It was a whale that took it. It was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest parmacetty that ever chipped a boat, ah ah!

Still want to go a-whalin' young man?

[Ishmael nods or gestures in someway]

Are thou the man to pitch a harpoon down a live whale throat, and then jump after it?

[Again, Ishmael nods, agrees in someway]

You want to see the world? Well then, step forward and take a peep over the weather bow, and then tell me what ye see.

Ishmael Not much, nothing but water.

C. Peleg Well, what dost thou think then of seeing the world? Do ye wish to go round Cape Horn to see any more of it. Can't ye see the world where you stand?

Ishmael *[to the audience]* I'll admit, I was a little staggered, but go a-whaling I must and would and the *Pequod* was as good a ship as any. Seeing me so determined, Captain Peleg expressed his willingness to ship me.

C. Peleg Well, Captain Bildad, what d'say, what lay shall we give this young man?

C. Bildad Seven hundred and seventy-seventh wouldn't be too much would it?

C. Peleg Why, blast your eyes, Bildad. Thou dost not want to swindle this young man! He must have more than that!

C. Bildad Seven hundred and seventy-seventh!

C. Peleg I'm going to put him down for three-hundreth, do you hear that, Bildad, The three-hundredth lay, I say.

Ishmael And, so it was that I was engaged on my first whaling voyage, my home for the next three years would be the *Pequod*. My delight deepened when I learned that my new bosom friend Queequeg was to join me. Our adventures were set to begin

Music - Enter Elijah

Ishmael Queequeg and I had just led the Pequod and were sauntering away from the water when a stranger called out:

“Shipmates, have ye shipped in that ship?”

The stranger was shabbily dressed in faded jacket, patched trousers and a rag of a black handkerchief around his neck, his face smallpoxed and marked. He was a most distressing and unwholesome figure.

“Have ye shipped there?” He repeated.

Yes, I said, we have just signed.

“Signed anything about your souls?” Seeing us puzzled he added. Oh, perhaps you haven’t got any? I know many chaps who haven’t got any and good luck to them. A soul’s a sort of a fifth wheel to a wagon.”

What are you jabbering on about man? I cried.

“Elijah”, he said. “Me name’s Elijah.” “Ye haven’t seen him yet, have ye? Captain Ahab, have ye seen him yet?”

No we haven’t, I replied, feeling increasing annoyed with the interruption. Captain Ahab’s sick, they say, but is getting better and better and will be right again before long.

The stranger laughed – somehow it lacked friendliness and warmth. “Did they tell you about him? Did they tell you about that thing that happened to him off Cape Horn, long ago, when he lay like dead for three days and nights? Nothing about that scrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa? Nothing about spitting in the silver communion cup? Nothing about losing his leg in the last voyage according to the prophecy?

Didn't hear a word about them matters? No, I don't think ye did, how could ye?

But, what of it? You've signed the papers and what's to be, will be and some sailor or another must go with him. God pity you all! Morning to ye, shipmates, I'm sorry I stopped ye."

With that the stranger walked away. I must admit it left me feeling somewhat uneasy. He opened all kinds of disquieting thoughts and apprehensions, all connected with the Pequod and Captain Ahab. But, go awhaling I must and so in my heart I declared him a humbug.

Scene 5 All Astir

Ishmael The first few days passed in great activity aboard the *Pequod*. Old sails were mended, new sails rigged, the decks scrubbed and scoured. What a multitude of things came on board! Barrels of salt pork, salt beef, bread, water and fuel. Beds, saucepans, knives and forks, shovels and tongs, napkins and nutcrackers and whatnots indispensable to the business of housekeeping upon the wide ocean for three long years, far from all grocers, doctors and bakers. It must be remembered that of all ships, whaling vessels are the most exposed to accidents of all kinds. Hence, the addition of spare boats, spare lines, harpoons and spare everything, almost, but a spare captain and duplicate ship.

During these days of preparation, Queequeg and I often asked about Captain Ahab, and how he was and when he was coming to board his ship. To these questions they would answer that he was getting better and better and was expected on board any day. If I had been downright honest with myself, I would have seen very plainly in my heart that I did not fancy being committed to such a long voyage without once laying my eyes on the man who was to be the absolute dictator of it. But, when a man suspects any wrong he often strives to cover up his suspicions even from himself. I said nothing and tried to think nothing.

Instead, I turned my attention to the men of the *Pequod*.

Note: the transition between scenes 5 & 6 to be seamless.

Scene 6 Knights and Squires, and Cetology

Ishmael The chief mate of the *Pequod* was Starbuck, a native of Nantucket, and a Quaker. He was a long, earnest man and though born on an icy coast, well adapted to endure hot latitudes, his flesh being as hard as twice-baked biscuit. He was by no means ill-looking, quite the contrary. His pure tight skin was an excellent fit; and embalmed with inner health and strength. He was a staid and steadfast man and uncommonly conscientious for a seaman and endued with a deep natural reverence, the wild watery loneliness of his life did incline him to superstition, but a superstition springing from intelligence than from ignorance.

Starbuck I will have no man in my boat who is not afraid of a whale.

Ishmael Aye, aye, Starbuck, there, is as careful a man as you'll find anywhere in this fishery.

Starbuck I am here in this here ocean to kill whales for my living and not be killed by them for theirs/

Ishmael *[continuing the sentence]* and that hundreds of men had been so killed Starbuck knew well. Starbuck was no crusader after perils; in him courage was not a sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him. In this business of whaling, courage was one of the staples of the ship, like her beef and her bread and not to be foolishly wasted...

Stubb was the second mate and a Cape Cod man. Happy go-lucky, he presided over his whaleboat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner and all his crew invited guests. His black, little pipe was one of the regular features of his face. You would almost have expected him to turn out of his bunk without his nose as without his pipe. For when Stubb dressed, instead of putting his legs into his trousers, he put his

pipe into his mouth.

The third mate, Flask, was a short, stout and ruddy fellow who seemed to think that the great Leviathans had personally affronted him and it was a point of honour to “destroy them all!”

Of the *Pequod's* officers every one of them different in their own way, all of them Americans, a Nantucketer, a Vineyarder, a Cape Cod man, but, of the men before the mast not one in two American born. Herein, it is the same for the fisheries as with the American armies, navies, the construction of the canals and railroads. Because in all these cases, the American liberally provides the brains, the rest of the world generously supplies the muscle. No small number of the crew hailed from rocky shores, the volcanic islands of the Azores, Greenland, Britain, Shetland Islands...When I think about it, these whaling seamen were all nearly Islanders... Islanders seem to make the best whalemen.

But of Captain Ahab –nothing above the hatches was seen...

[looking out to sea. Time has passed - they have left the harbour]

Already we are boldly launched upon the deep and soon we will shall be lost in its unshored, harbourless immensities. Ere that come to pass; it is time to attend to the matter of the great Leviathan himself. It is why we are here after all!

Yet it is no easy task. But, I take the good old-fashioned ground that a whale is a fish and call upon holy Jonah to back me.

Sperm Whale- also known as the Trumpha Whale, the Physete Whale and the Anvil-Headed Whale, he is without doubt the largest inhabitant of the globe, the most formidable and majestic of all whales.

Right Whale, or the Black Whale, the Greenland Whale, the Great Whale, the True Whale, regularly hunted by man. It yields the article commonly known as whalebone or baleen, found most discreetly in the female bodice.

Finback, Tall-Spout and Long John seen almost in every sea. Very shy; always solitary, unexpectedly rising to surface in the remotest and most sullen of waters, his straight and lofty jet rising like a misanthropic spear upon a barren plain.

Humpback – has a great pack on him like a peddler, his oil is not very valuable.

Razor Back – I've seen one from a distance...he eludes both hunters and philosophers.

Sulphur-Bottom, I have never seen one.

Grampus – swims in herds.

Blackfish – sixteen or eighteen feet in length.

Nostril Whale – horn. **Killer Whale** – savage. **Porpoise** – good for eating.

And, not forgetting the Bottle-Nose Whale – not good for drinking; The Junk Whale, The Pudding-Head Whale – not a fine desert -, The Cape Whale, the Leading Whale, the Cannon Whale, the Scragg Whale, the Coppered Whale, the Elephant Whale, the Iceberg Whale, the Quog Whale, the Blue Whale....

But for oil? The Sperm Whale burns the purest, the brightest and yet there is not a lit lamp in the world that has not cost the life of a whaleman.

Song: Spanish Ladies

Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain;
Our captain's commanded we sail for New England
But we hope in a short time to see you again.

We'll rant and we'll roar, like New Bedford whalers,
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and below
Until we sight The New Bedford light
Then straight down the channel to anchor we'll go.

Then we hove our ship to, with the wind at the sou'west,
Then we hove our ship to, for to strike soundings clear;
Then we filled our main topsail
And bore right away, my boys,
And right up the Channel our course we did steer.

We'll rant and we'll roar, like New Bedford whalers,
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and below
Until we sight The New Bedford light
Then straight down the channel to anchor we'll go.

We'll rant and we'll roar, like New Bedford whalers,
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and below
Until we sight The New Bedford light
Then straight down the channel to anchor we'll go.

Scene 7

We meet Captain Ahab

Ishmael

It was Christmas when the Pequod shot out of the harbour and for a good while we had biting Polar weather, though all the time running away from it southward leaving that merciless winter and all its intolerable weather behind us. It was on one of these mornings, grey and gloomy with a fair wind behind us that I saw my first glimpse of Captain Ahab. Allow me to describe him to you.

He looked like a man cut away from the stake. His whole high broad form seemed made of solid bronze. Down one side of his tawny scorched face, threading its way out from among his grey hairs, till it disappeared in his clothing, was a slender rod-like mark - lividly whitish. Whether that mark was born with him, or left it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could say. So grim did the whole aspect of Ahab affect me and the livid brand which streaked it that I hardly noted the barbaric ivory leg upon which he partly stood.

I was struck with the singular posture he maintained. Upon each side of the quarterdeck there was a hole bored half an inch or so into the plank. His bone leg steadied in that hole; Captain Ahab stood erect, looking straight out beyond the ship's ever-pitching prow. Not a word he spoke; nor did his officers say aught to him. Ere long, he withdrew into his cabin. But after that morning, he was visible every day to the crew and it came to pass that he was almost continually on deck either standing in his pivot hole, seated on his ivory chair or heavily walking the deck.

Months passed. Warm, pleasant winds arrived; we threw off our heavy oilskin watch coats and rolled on through lazy, seductive seas. Until, at long last, Ahab broke his silence.

Ahab Send everybody aft! Mastheads, there! Come down!
[once everyone is assembled] What do ye do when ye see a whale, Men?

Company Sing out for him

Ahab Good! And, what do ye do next?

Company Lower away and after him!

Ahab And what tune is it ye pull to, men?

Company A dead whale or a stove boat

Ahab All ye mastheaders! Look ye! D'ye see this Spanish ounce of gold? It is a sixteen-dollar piece, men. D'ye see it? Mr Starbuck, hand me yon top mull.

[Ahab hammers the gold coin onto a mast]

Whosoever of ye raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw; whosoever of ye raises me that white-headed whale, with three holes punctured in his starboard fluke – look ye, whosoever of ye raises me that same white whale, he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!

Company Huzza! Huzza!

Ahab It's a white whale, I say. Skin your eyes for him, men; look sharp for white water; if ye see but a bubble, sing out.

Company That white whale must be the same that some call Moby Dick!

Ahab Death and devils' men, it is Moby Dick, I say. Moby Dick is the white whale.

It was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that bought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye, aye! It was that accursed white whale that razeed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me forever and a day!

Aye, aye! I'll chase him around Good Hope and round the Horn and round the Norway Maelstrom and round perditions flames before I give him up. And, this is what ye have shipped for, men! To chase that white whale on both sides of the lands and over all sides of the earth, till he spouts black bloods and rolls fin out. What say, ye, men, will ye splice ye hands on it?

Company Aye, aye!

Ahab God bless ye, men. Steward go and draw a great measure of grog. But, what's this long face about, Mr Starbuck, wilt thou not chase the White Whale? Art not game for Moby Dick?

Starbuck I am game for his crooked jaw and for the jaws of Death too, Captain Ahab, if it fairly comes in the way of our business we follow. But I came here to hunt whales, not my captain's vengeance. How many barrels will vengeance yield? It will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market.

Ahab Nantucket market! Hoot! If money's to be the measurer man, let me let me tell thee my vengeance will fetch a great premium here!
[Ahab slaps his chest].

Starbuck Vengeance on a dumb brute! It is a blasphemy!

Ahab Talk not to me of blasphemy, man! I see in him outrageous strength, an inscrutable malice sinewing. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate. I will wreak hate upon him! Drink, ye harpooneers!
Drink and swear, ye men! Death to Moby Dick. God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby Dick to his death!

Scene 8 Stubb Kills a Whale

Company There she blows! There! There! There she blows!
Where-away?
On the lee beam, about two miles off! A school of them!
There go flukes!
Lower away! Lower away!
Give way, all four boats. Pull out to leeward!
There! There! There again! There, she blows right ahead, boys!

Stubb Pull, pull, my fine hearts alive; pull, my children; pull my
little ones! Break your backbones, my boys! Pull then, do
pull! There's the stroke to sweep the stakes! Hurrah for the gold cup of
sperm oil, my heroes! Three cheers, men – all hearts alive!

Easy, easy, don't be in a hurry- don't be in a hurry.
Go softly, softly! That's it! Long and strong!

Company Give way! There, there!
Pull, will ye? Pull, can't ye? Pull, won't ye?
Why in the name of ginger cakes don't ye pull?
Pull and break something!
Pull and start your eyes out!
There's a hogshead of sperm ahead!
Pull my boys!
Sperm, sperm's the play!
It ain't the White Whale today!

Stubb Give way! Give way men! Give way! Every man look out along his
oars!

Pull, babes – pull, all.

But what are you hurrying about? Softly, softly and steadily, my men! Only pull, and keep nothing more.

Company Take it easy!
Why don't you take it easy?
It ain't the White Whale! Take it easy!

Stubb Give way men! There's time to kill a whale yet!
Hush! Hush, men!
There's his hump. There, there! Give it to him.

Ishmael Stubb hurled his harpoon at the whale.
The line held.
Hold on! Hold on, he cried.
The boat flew through the boiling water.
The line extended the entire length of the upper part of the boat, you would have thought the craft had two keels- one cleaving the water and the other in the air.
The whale pushed forwards.
The line held.
Each man clinging to his seat, to prevent being tossed to the foam.
A Nantucket sleigh ride.
Whole Atlantics and Pacific's passed by as they shot on their way, till at length the whale slackened his flight.
Haul in- haul in, cried Stubb.
Stubb aimed dart after dart after dart into the whale.
A red tide poured from the monster. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood.
Jet after jet of white smoke shot from the spiracle of the whale.
Stubb cried to the bowsman. Pull up close! Pull up close!

He struck!

Jet after jet of red smoke shot into the air.

The whale rolled into view. Red dripping down his motionless
flanks into the sea.

His heart had burst.

Scene 9

Cutting In

Ishmael

It was a Saturday night following the first kill and such a Sabbath followed. The ivory *Pequod* was turned into what seemed a shamble, every sailor a Butcher's boy. You would have thought we were offering up ten thousand red oxen to the sea gods.

In the Southern fisheries a captured sperm whale, after a long a weary toil, is bought alongside late at night and it is not customary to proceed to the business of cutting him in. For that business is an extremely laborious one and requires all hands to set about it. Therefore, the common usage is to take in all sail, lash the helm a'lee and then send everybody below to his hammock till daylight. But sometimes, and especially upon the line in the Pacific, an incalculable host of sharks gather round the moored carcase. Why if a whale were left for six hours, say, on a stretch, little more than the skeleton would be left by morning! That night of the first kill, any man looking overboard would have thought the whole round sea one huge cheese and those sharks the maggots in it.

And, so we went to the bloody business of cutting the whale.

In a great and difficult procedure, the head is removed and hauled up on to the deck or lashed firmly to the side of the ship. A hole is cut and a bucket lowered to that cavernous hole within to collect the spermaceti. Green hands are often forced down into that hellish hole and I once heard of a head containing a man falling back into the sea off a broke line, as if in a great diving bell, he was saved by the swift action of a shipmate, following and birthing him anew, breach-like through that hole.

Allow me to explain the enormous cutting tackles. Among other things a cluster of blocks generally painted green, like a vast bunch of grapes, is swayed up to the maintop and lashed to the lower masthead, the strongest point anywhere above a ship's deck. A hawser-like rope is then winded to the windlass, and this huge lower block of the tackles is swung over the whale. To this block, a great blubber hook, weighing some one hundred pounds, is attached.

Men, armed with long spades, proceed to cut a hole in the beheaded whale's body for the insertion of the hook, just above the two side fins. The whole crew then take to the job of heaving the windlass.

Instantly, the entire ship careens over on her side; every bolt in the *Pequod* starts like the nail heads of an old house in frosty weather. The ship trembles and more and more as she leans over to the whale, while every gasping heave of the windlass till at last a swift, startling snap is heard; with a great swash the ship rolls upwards and backwards from the whale and the tackle rises into sight dragging with it the first sight of blubber.

The blubber covers the whale precisely as the rind does an orange, and it is stripped off from the body precisely as an orange is stripped by spiralizing it. The strain constantly kept up by the windless keeps the whale rolling and rolling over and over in the water and the blubber uniformly peels off along the line called the scarf.

The whale is hoisted higher and higher till its upper end graces the maintop. Until at last the men at the windless cease heaving and for a moment or two the prodigious blood-dripping mass sways to and fro and everyone must take good heed to dodge it when it swings, else it may box his ears and throw him overboard.

Next, a harpooneer advances with a long keen weapon called a boarding sword and watching his chance he slices out a hole in the lower part of the swaying mass. Into this hole the end of a second tackle is then hooked so as to retain a hold upon the blubber. The swordsman, warning all hands to back off, makes a desperate dash at the mass, lunging sidelong so that the lower part is still fast, the upper strip, called a blanket piece, is stripped clear and is all ready for lowering. Down goes the first strip through the main hatchway into the blubber room.

Sundry, nimble hands keep coiling away the long blanket piece as if it were a great mass of plaited serpents. And, thus the work proceeds; the two tackles hoisting and lowering simultaneously, both whale and windlass heaving, the heavers singing, the blubber room gentleman coiling, the ship straining and all hands swearing occasionally.

Finally all that remains is the white peeled body of the whale. The men haul in the chains and whale is released back into the sea. But, unlike men, the body does not sink - it floats and a whale without its blubber is a shocking sight, even for the most accustomed of whaleman. For hours and hours a most hideous sight is seen. Beneath a clouded and azure sky, drafted by a pleasant breeze that great mass of death floats on. That vast headless phantom floats on and on till lost in infinite perspective.

But, for Captain Ahab, the kill hardly registered. He gave scant heed to the butchery, the peeling, the barrels of sperm oil stored in the hold, the frenzied feeding of the sharks and the lives of the harpooneers lost in the pursuit. His path was fixed. He stood in that pivot hole, gazing windward, still and yet in torment.

Song: Greenland Whale Fisheries

'Twas in eighteen hundred and fifty-three
And of June the thirteenth day,
That our gallant ship her anchor weighed,
And for Greenland bore away, brave boys,
And for Greenland bore away.

The lookout in the crosstrees stood
With spyglass in his hand;
There's a whale, there's a whale,
there's whalefish he cried
And she blows at every span, brave boys
She blows at every span.

The captain stood on the quarter deck,
And a fine little man was he;
Overhaul, overhaul! Let your davit tackles fall,
And launch your boats for sea, brave boys
And launch your boats for sea.

Now the boats were launched and the men aboard,
And the whale was full in view.
Resolved was each seaman bold
To steer where the whalefish blew, brave boys
To steer where the whalefish blew.

We stuck the whale the line paid out,
But she gave a flourish with her tail,
The boat capsized and four men were drowned,

And we never caught that whale, brave boys,
And we never caught that whale.

To lose the whale, our captain said,
It grieves my heart full sore,
But oh! to lose (those) four gallant men
It grieves me ten times more, brave boys
It grieves me ten times more.

The winter star doth now appear,
So, boys we'll anchor weight;
It's time to leave this cold country
And homeward bear away, brave boys
And homeward bear away.

Oh Greenland is a dreadful place
A land that's never green
Where there's ice and snow,
and the whalefishes blow
and the daylight's seldom seen brave boys
But the daylight's seldom seen.

Scene 10 The Iron Way

Ahab I leave a white and turbid wake, pale waters, paler cheeks, where'er I sail. The sun goes down, my soul mounts up! She wearies with her endless hill, Oh, is the crown too heavy that I wear? Oh, time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely night, it lights not me; all the loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. I am damned in the midst of Paradise!

What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad – Starbuck does, but I'm demonic, I am madness maddened! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered and aye, I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer.

Ye cannot swerve me. My path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsound gorges, under torrents beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle to the iron way!

Starbuck I, Starbuck, my soul is more than matched; she's overmanned and by a madman! He, Ahab, has blasted all my reason out of me! I think I see his impious end; but I feel I must help him to it! Horrible old man! Look, how he lords it over all below! Oh! I plainly see it – to obey, rebelling and worse yet, to hate with a touch of pity!

Yet, there is hope. Tide and time flows wide. The hated whale has the round watery world to swim in, as the small goldfish has its glassy globe.

Oh, God to sail with such a heathen crew! The White Whale is their demigorgon! Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward! Foremost through the sparkling sea shoots on the gay, embattled, bantering bow, but only to drag dark Ahab after it, where he broods within his sternward cabin – I do feel the latent horror in thee, yet I will try and fight ye!

Stubb [smoking his pipe] A! HA! HA! HA! Hem! clear my throat – I've been thinking over it ever since and that ha, ha's the final consequence. Why? Because a laugh's the wisest, easiest answer to all that's queer and come what will, one comfort's always left – it's all predestined. I have not heard this talk with Starbuck, but to my poor eye, Starbuck looked something that I other evening felt.

Wise Stubb, that's my title – well Stubb, what of it? I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will. I'll go to it laughing.

Scene II

The Castaway

Ishmael

An event occurred a few days after we reached the hunting grounds. An event most lamentable; I fear I must convey it to you. Now, in a whale ship, it is not everyone that goes in the boats. Some few hands are reserved called shipkeepers, whose province it is to work the vessel when the boats are pursuing the whale. As a general thing, these shipkeepers are as hardy as the men who man the boats, but if there happens to be a fellow unduly slender, clumsy, or timorous, then he is certainly to be the shipkeeper.

The shipkeeper of the Pequod was a young Negro by the name of Pippin, or Pip, as we called him. He was a most jovial, simple fellow. He had many a times in his hometown of Tolland County enlivened a fiddlers frolic on the green.

But to the story.

It came to pass that Stubb's oarman chanced to sprain his hand and for a time being Pip was put into his place.

The first time Stubb lowered him, Pip evinced much nervousness; happily, he escaped close contact with the whale. But, on the second lowering, the boat paddled on top of the whale; and as the fish received the darted iron it gave its customary rap, which happened to be under Pip's seat. The noise startled him, causing him to leap, paddle in hand and out of the boat and in such a way as to tangle himself in the slack whale line. The instant the whale began the run the line swiftly straightened, and presto, there was poor Pip, bound neck and chest in the line.

With no other course of action, Stubb bade the men to cut Pip free.

“Cut him free,” he roared; and so the whale was lost and Pip was saved.

Now, while a kindly man, Stubb, like most men, was a money-making animal and was sore at the loss of a whale.

“Stick to the boat, Pip, or by the Lord, I won’t pick you up if you jump; mind that. We can’t afford to lose whales by the like of you; a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind, and don’t jump anymore.”

But, we are all in the hands of God; and Pip jumped again. It was under similar circumstances to the first, but this time he did not get caught on the line and when the whale started to run he was left behind on the sea. Alas, Stubb was true to his word. In three minutes, a whole mile of shoreless ocean was between Pip and the whaleboat.

The awful loneliness he must have felt. It must have been intolerable, a lonely castaway, though the loftiest and brightest. It was only mere chance that the second whale boat happened to pass. He was picked up and rescued. But, while the sea had kept his body afloat, it had drowned his soul. Not drowned entirely. Rather carried down alive to new, strange depths. In the immensity of the ocean he saw his own insignificance and God’s indifference. His shipmates declared him mad.

Blame not Stubb too hardly. The thing is common in fishery and in the sequel of the narrative, I would come to learn what abandonment feels like myself.

Scene 12 Queequeg's Coffin

Ishmael We were a few months into the voyage when Queequeg fell ill. He caught a terrible chill, which lapsed into a fever and after some days of suffering laid close to death.

He called one of the crew to him and said that whilst he was in Nantucket he chanced to see certain canoes of dark wood, just like the rich wood of his native isles. He has learned that all whalemens who died in Nantucket were laid in those same dark canoes and that the fancy of being so laid had much pleased him. He added that he shuddered at the thought of being buried in his hammock, as was the custom, and tossed into the sea to be devoured by sharks.

The carpenter was called to do Queequegs' bidding. There was some old lumber aboard and from these dark planks a coffin was made. "Ah! Poor fellow, he'll have to die now," exclaimed the crew.

When the last nail was duly driven and the lid duly planed and fitted, Queequeg demanded that the coffin be brought to him. He regarded the coffin with an attentive eye, he called for his harpoon to be laid inside, along with ship's biscuits and a flask of water to be placed at the head. He entreated to be lifted inside and the lid placed over: "Rarmai" (it will do nicely) he murmured at last.

But now that he had made every preparation for death and now that his coffin proved a good fit, Queequeg suddenly rallied. Soon there was no need of the coffin. He simply said that at the moment of death he recalled a little duty ashore which he was leaving undone and he had changed his mind about dying.

With a wild whimsy he used his coffin for a sea chest, emptying into it his canvas bag of clothes. Many hours he spent carving the lid in all manner of grotesque figures and drawings, striving in his own way to copy the twisted tattooing of his own body. It became an extension of his own self, his own body of sorts.

I tell you this because there too came a time when I was in great need of Queequeg's coffin.

Scene 13 The Great South Sea

[Dream Scene]

Ishmael We emerged at last upon the great South Sea. The great Pacific Ocean itself!
That serene ocean rolled eastwards from me, a thousand leagues of blue.

There is no one who knows the sweet mystery of this sea, whose awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath. Here are millions of shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnambulisms, reveries; all that we call lives and souls, lie dreaming, dreaming, still; tossed like slumberers in their beds; the ever rolling waves, the ever restless waves, the tide-beating heart of the earth.

But all this was lost on Captain Ahab. He saw no beauty, no majesty in the scene. Launched at length on these final waters the old man's purpose intensified. Stern all! He cried. The White Whale spouts thick blood!

Scene 14 The Rachel

Ahab Ship, Ahoy! Hast thou seen the White Whale?
Hast seen the White Whale?
The White Whale!
Moby Dick! Have ye seen him?

Ishmael You'd suppose that the life of a whaler is a lonely one. But it need not be so. Two strangers crossing the Pine Barrens in New York State or the desolate Salisbury Plains in England cannot avoid passing by without a mutual salutation, perhaps stopping for a moment to exchange the news. It is only natural, then, that upon the illimitable plains of the sea, off lone Fanning's Island or the faraway King's-Mill Islands, two whaling ships should not only interchange hails but come into closer, more friendly, sociable contact.

And what does the whaler do when she meets another whaler in any sort of decent weather? Why she has a Gam!

And, what is a Gam?

Why is a meeting of two or more whaling ships, generally on cruising grounds; when after exchanging hails, they exchange visits by boat's crews, the two Captains remaining, for a time, on board of one ship and the two chief mates on the other.

Its purpose is evident. For the long absent ship, the outward bounder, perhaps has letters on board, at any rate, a number of men are known to each other and have all sorts of domestic things to talk about. At the very least, they would have an agreeable chat! And, in return for her courtesy, the outward-bound ship would receive the latest whaling intelligence from the cruising grounds, information of the upmost importance to her.

During our long voyage, no small number of whaling ships passed us by: the *Albatross*, the *Town-ho*, the *Jeroboam*, the *Virgin*, the *Rosebud*, the *Samuel Enderby*, the *Bachelor*, the *Delight* and the *Rachel*. Each and every one a different story:

The *Albatross*: a shell of a craft, manned by madmen!

The *Jeroboam*: plagued!

The *Rosebud*: what a smell!

The *Virgin*: yet to catch a whale...

The *Bachelor*: uncommonly jolly!

The *Delight*: six men killed in a single day...

And the White Whale swam on, unhurried and unharmed through the deep blue sea.

Ahab Gam be damned! Forward there! Set sail, and keep her to the wind!

Ishmael Until, at last, we passed the *Rachel*.

Ahab Has seen the White Whale?

C. Gardiner Aye, yesterday. Have ye seen a whaleboat adrift?

Ishmael It seemed somewhat late in the afternoon of the previous day, while the men were engaged with a shoal of whales, Moby Dick suddenly loomed up out of the water, wherein one of the boats had been instantly lowered in chase. In the distance the men saw the boat disappear out of sight, a swift gleam of bubbling white water and after that nothing more, whence it was concluded that the whale must have run away with his pursuers, as often happens.

C. Gardiner My boy, my own boy is among them. For God's sake – I beg you! For forty eight hours let me charter your ship – I will gladly pay for it – if, there be no other way – for forty eight hours only – only that-you must, oh, you must, you must!

Stubb His son! Oh, it his son he's lost! What say, Ahab? We must save the boy!

Ahab He drowned with the rest of them last night...

Ishmael Captain Ahab would not budge. However much the Captain of the *Rachel* pleaded. Do to me as you would me do to you, begged the Captain. "For you too have a boy, a child of your own, nestling safely at home. I beg you! Let me charter your ship. Say aye to me, say aye to me."

Captain Ahab was unmovable. I will not do it. Even now I lose time. God bless ye, man, and may I forgive myself, but I must go. Let the *Pequod* sail as before.

Soon the two ships diverged their wakes and as long as *Rachel* was in view she was seen to yaw hither and thither at every dark spot, however small, on the sea.

By her still and halting course, woeful and winding, you plainly saw that this ship, so wept with spray, remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children.

Scene 15 Typhoon

A fierce typhoon strikes the Pequod, like an exploding bomb. The sky and sea roars with lightning and thunder. The Pequod is thrown helpless and adrift. The men struggle to hoist and lash the rigging in the onslaught.

Stubb Bad work! Bad work! The sea will have its way. You can't fight it!

Starbuck Avast Stubb! If thou art a brave man thou wilt hold thy peace!

Company Mark! The Typhoon comes from the east!
The very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick!
The very course he swung this day at noon!
To windward, all is blackness! All is doom!
Old Thunder!
The lightning rods! The rods!
Drop them overboard! Drop them over, quick!
It's too late, too late.
Look aloft! The masts are alight.
Have mercy on us all!

Ahab Aye, aye men! Look up at it.

[Sudden repeat flashes of lightning]

It is a sign, I say, a sign. The white flame leads to Moby Dick.

[Thunder, lightning crash]

Company God, God is against thee, old man!
Tis an ill voyage/

Ill begun/
Ill continued
Let's square the yards/
Make a fair wind of it homewards/
To a better voyage than this!

Ahab All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine; and your hearts, souls and bodies, lungs and life. We hunt the White Whale.

Starbuck *[to the audience]* Shall I allow this crazed man to drag us all down to doom with him? Thirty men or more will come to deadly harm if Ahab have his way. I can't withstand him. No reasoning, no remonstrance, no entreaty will he hear, all he hears is scorned. He say'st the men have vow'd thy vow, say'st all of us are Ahabs!

Company Is there no other way?
Make him prisoner?
Bind him in chains in the hold?
Only a fool would try it.
He would be more hideous than a chained tiger,
I could not endure the sight.
We stand alone upon an open sea.
The land is hundreds of leagues away.

Starbuck *[in a final plea to Ahab]* Oh, my Captain, my Captain! Noble soul! Grand old heart! Why should anyone give chase to that hated fish! Let us fly these deadly waters! Let us home, to our wives and children. Would we see old Nantucket again! Away! Let us away!

Ahab Man the Mastheads! Call all hands! A hump like a snow hill! It is Moby Dick.

Starbuck Great God, where art thou?

Scene 16

The Chase

Ishmael

For two long exhaustible days we gave chase to the White Whale. We suffered, how we suffered. But no fatal or serious ill seemed to have befallen anyone. True, some sprained shoulders, wrists and ankles and livid contusions among us and wrenched harpoons and lances, shattered oars and planks; but we were alive.

Those remarkable men of the *Pequod*, even now, my memory softens as I recall them. Men with homes and families, lives and loves. Do not be mistaken. A certain kind of man is called to the sea: hard, proud, stubborn and quick to violence. Softness, gentleness, does not come easy to Whalers.

But they were men I called friends. *Were* friends: Stubb, Flask, Queequeg. Starbuck, the most conscientious of all sailors, even then calling out to Ahab: Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man? Shall we be dragged by him to the bottom of the sea?

The third day arrived.

The morning of the third day dawned fair and fresh. Aloft there, called Ahab to the masthead. What d'ye see? What d'ye see?

Hours passed. Time itself held long breaths. But at long last we heard, 'Moby Dick! On deck there! brace her sharper up; crowd her into the wind's eye. Leeward, the white whale goes that way.

Ahab gave word and the boats were lowered. But then for some reason he paused.

Starbuck! He said. Some ships sail from their ports, and ever afters are missing. Some men die at ebb tide; some at low water; some at the full of the flood. For the third time I stake my soul upon this voyage. Starbuck, I am old. Shake hands with me, man.

Their hands met; their eyes fastened. Oh my Captain, my Captain – noble heart – go not- go not!

Lower away, cried Ahab. Lower away. Lower away.

Ishmael Too late Ahab understands the fury of the mighty Whale.

The Whale advances upon the black hull of the *Pequod*. The Ship! Cries Ahab. Will ye not save my ship? Oh Starbuck, let not Starbuck die! My God, stand by me now! And now poor Stubb goes to bed upon a mattress that is all too soft. Oh Flask, poor Flask, ere we die.

From all the ships bows, nearly all seamen hang inactive, hammers, bits of plank, lances, harpoons lifeless, still, all eyes on the whale. Retribution is swift, unforgiving. The solid white buttress of the whale's forehead smotes the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reel. Some men fall flat on their faces and through the breach they hear the waters pour.

Ahab hurls his harpoon at the Whale. The line catches him around the neck and in an instant he too is gone.

Scene 17

Epilogue

Ishmael

So it chanced, it was I that the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman. On that last day when the men were tossed out of boat and dropped astern I was the last to be drawn into that closing vortex of the half spent ship. When I reached it, it had subsided into a creamy pool. Round and round, contracting towards the bubble like axis did I revolve. Till the black bubble upward bust and Queequeg's coffin, my life boy shot lengthwise from the sea. Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one day and night, I floated on till picked up by another ship. It was the *Rachel*, in retracing her search for her missing children she had found another orphan.

Company

Starbuck, Stubb, Flask, Queequeg, Ahab... the *Pequod*?

All gone. All lost.

Old Nantucket? Spanish Ladies, Candlelight?

No more.

The Whale?

Hunted, chased, slaughtered in their thousands. Spermaceti burns the brightest but the cost, the cost!

And, Melville?

Forgotten... Almost forgotten.

But not the Sea. The Sea rolls on as it did five thousand years ago and for five thousand more.

And, I am not lost. I am not forgotten.

Call me Ishmael.